

**Revisiting Kenya's Diplomatic Complexity: Policy Strategies and the Recognition
Dilemma of Israel During Cold War Shifts (1978-1990).**

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Structure of the Study

This paper is structured into the following sections: first, an introduction providing the historical context of Kenya's, then a literature review of Kenya's foreign policy during the Cold War, followed by an exploration of theoretical frameworks that offer insight into Kenya's diplomatic behavior. The methodology section will detail the research approach, followed by a comprehensive analysis and discussion of Kenya's diplomatic stance regarding Israel. Finally, the conclusion will summarize key findings and provide recommendations for future research in African diplomatic history.

Introduction

Historical and Global Context: A Century of Sustained Ties Between Kenya and Israel

For over a century, amid Cold War tensions and shifts in global politics, Kenya has faced crucial diplomatic decisions regarding the recognition of Israel. This period marks a pivotal shift in Kenya's foreign policy, with its choices impacting both regional stability and global partnerships. This study explores the complexities of Kenya's foreign policy and the challenges of its recognition dilemma concerning Israel during President Moi's administration.

Kenya's historical connection to Israel began in the early 1900s with the "Uganda Scheme" proposed by British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain in 1903. While the scheme was ultimately dismissed, Jewish migration to Kenya followed. Despite opposition from British settlers, the Zionist movement remained committed to establishing a Jewish state in the Middle East.

The relationship deepened as the Jewish community in Kenya supported members of the "Irgun" and "Lehi" groups detained at a center in Gilgil in 1947 (Kenyan Embassy in Israel,

2024). Israel's establishment of its embassy in Nairobi on December 10, 1963, just before Kenya's independence, marked a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship. Diplomatic relations were temporarily interrupted during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict but were restored on December 23, 1988. A further strengthening of ties occurred when President Moi visited Israel in 1994, leading to the appointment of Kenya's first Ambassador to Israel in March of the same year.

Kenya's consistent support for Israel, especially after the Entebbe raid in 1976, and Israel's assistance during the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings and the 2006 Nairobi building collapse, solidified their enduring partnership. Today, their cooperation spans politics, business, economics, science, technology, cultural exchanges, and academic partnerships, setting the stage for continued growth in their bilateral relations (Kenyan Embassy in Israel, 2024).

The Life and Leadership of Daniel Toroitich arap Moi

Daniel Toroitich arap Moi succeeded Jomo Kenyatta as President of Kenya in 1978, serving until 2002. He had previously served as Vice President after replacing Jaramogi Oginga Odinga in that role (East & Richard, June 3, 2021). Moi was born on September 2, 1924, in Kuriengwo, a member of the Tugen sub-group of the Kalenjin community in Kenya's Rift Valley. His presidency lasting over two decades, made him one of Kenya's longest-serving leaders. He passed away on February 4, 2020 (McKenna, February 10, 2020).

On August 1, 1982, there was an attempted coup led by Senior Private Grade I Hezekiah Ochuka to overthrow President Moi. The military quickly intervened under the leadership of Chief of General Staff Mohamoud Mohamed and successfully quashed the coup. As a result, Ochuka and his associates were executed (Nyamora, 1992, p. 12; Ndunda, 2016).

Moi's leadership was shaped by his alignment with Kenyatta's pro-Western strategies during the Cold War (1947–1991). However, in the 1990s challenges emerged as the Cold War ended and the global economic slowdown affected Kenya. This period saw increasing pressure for political change (Ndunda, 2016). In 1991, opposition parties led efforts that pushed Kenya toward a multiparty democracy (Throup & Hornsby, 1998).

Moi's victory in the 1992 elections marked a shift toward democracy, despite allegations of electoral fraud and ensuing unrest. The 1997 elections also saw turmoil but Moi secured another term. It was only constitutional changes that prevented him from running in the 2002 elections, leading to his retirement. During this time the ruling party KANU split, and the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) was formed as a result. This paved the way for Mwai Kibaki's victory and Kenya's third presidency signaling a significant political shift, and Moi's departure amid public dissatisfaction (Lacey, 2002).

After 2002, Moi's political influence waned though he remained a prominent figure. In July 2007 he was appointed as a peace envoy in Sudan where he played a key role in supporting peace initiatives (Hull, Reuters, 2007). His health however, declined over time (Kahawatungu, August 29, 2017). Moi died at The Nairobi Hospital on February 4, 2020 and a state funeral was held at Nyayo Stadium on February 11, 2020. Military honors were granted and he was laid to rest at his home in Karabak, Nakuru County beside his wife Lena Bomet with a 19-gun salute and a flyby formation (BBC News, February 11, 2020).

There was some debate surrounding his age as his son suggested that he might have been 105 years old, while other reports stated he was under 100 years old (Standard Digital, February 10, 2020). Regardless, Moi's passing marked the end of an era characterized by both significant achievements and controversies including corruption and a complex foreign policy stance,

particularly regarding Israel. Moi maintained a delicate and often ambiguous relationship with Israel. At times Kenya and Israel cooperated, such as when Israel provided military assistance during the 1976 Entebbe rescue operation, which used Nairobi for refueling. However, Moi's government also aligned with broader African and Arab League positions critical of Israel influenced by Middle Eastern oil politics and Cold War dynamics. This duality in foreign policy often led to inconsistent diplomatic engagements reflecting Moi's broader governance style which prioritized regime survival over strategic national direction.

Gap in Literature

Although much has been written about Cold War diplomacy in Africa, Kenya's specific perspective on Israel during this time remains largely unexplored. Existing studies primarily examine broader trends in African diplomacy, overlooking Kenya's diplomatic strategy regarding Israel. This study examines the factors that influenced Kenya's approach to diplomacy during the Cold War.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

This study examines how President Daniel arap Moi managed Kenya's relationship with Israel from 1978 to 1990, set against the backdrop of the Cold War. It focuses on Kenya's recognition policy toward Israel under Moi's leadership, a period marked by uncertainty. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of Kenya's foreign policy during this period and its role in the broader geopolitical landscape.

Key Research Question

How did Kenya navigate the challenges of supporting solidarity movements such as the Non-Aligned Movement, while managing geopolitical pressures regarding Israel between 1978 and 1990?

Significance of the Research

In 1793, U.S. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson asserted that every nation has the inherent right to govern itself and manage its foreign affairs. This principle emphasized that a nation's engagement with other countries is not just about friendship but is a crucial part of shaping its sovereignty (Jentleson & Paterson, 1997, p. 466-467). In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson shifted U.S. policy, requiring governments to gain popular support for recognition. This shift had profound implications, especially for countries like Kenya (Jentleson & Paterson, 1997).

This research aims to offer insights into Kenya's foreign policy under President Moi, particularly regarding its shifting orientation toward Israel. Kenya's strategic position in East Africa makes this relationship significant in global affairs. Understanding the dynamics between Kenya and Israel during Moi's presidency will provide valuable context for comparing the policies of subsequent Kenyan governments.

Preliminary Findings and Implications

Preliminary findings identify key elements that shaped Kenya's strategy throughout the Cold War. A significant aspect of this approach was the priority placed on safeguarding the country's security and welfare. The overarching goals were intricately connected to safeguarding concerns and conserving legacy, cultural heritage, and environments. As noted by Feliks and

Adolf (1954) national strategies should be firmly rooted in upholding and advancing a nation's principles and aspirations. Kenya's leaders understood the importance of maintaining stability and fostering unity to navigate the challenges of a regional and global landscape effectively.

Another significant factor shaping Kenya's foreign policy was the influence of systemic factors and actors. Kenya's foreign policy was greatly influenced by factors and key players besides internal politics, during the Cold War era as global and regional contexts were evolving rapidly (as noted in Mwangi's work in 1997). Economic circumstances and strategic geopolitical interests played a role in shaping approaches towards other countries.

The principle of positive nonalignment was central to Kenya's foreign policy approach, reflecting the nation's commitment to an independent position, free from the major ideological blocs. Kenya's foreign policy was strongly guided by the principle of nonalignment which emphasized the country's dedication to maintaining a position separate from major ideological groups. President Jomo Kenyatta expressed this position in 1966 through the KANU manifesto as a commitment to promoting justice and moral behavior in interactions (Kenyatta, 1966). This approach of nonalignment enabled Kenya to navigate through the conflicting agendas of nations while safeguarding independence and pursuing its national goals.

Furthermore, Kenya's foreign policy toward Israel during this period was marked by a positive viewpoint. During this time frame as in the past years of the period under review in Kenya's foreign relations with Israel were notably positive and supportive. President Kenyan indicated his admiration for Israel's efforts to build a nation by bringing together people from various backgrounds. He considered Israel's approach to promoting national unity as a potential model that Kenya could follow especially through movements like "Harambee " aimed at

fostering unity and shared responsibility among the diverse ethnic groups in Kenya (Kenyatta

1961). However, the favorable perception of Israel was tempered by Kenya's continental concerns that frequently necessitated cautious diplomacy circumspection and a subtle approach on international affairs.

The Review of Literature

Kenya's Perspective on Israel Recognition

Research on Kenya's perspective on Israel's recognition offers important insights into the political dynamics that have shaped the relationship between the two countries. Scholars have examined the factors influencing Kenya's decision to recognize Israel and how global and regional politics have impacted this relationship. However, there is a scarcity of comprehensive records, particularly regarding foreign policy declarations made by President Moi in public speeches (Oloo, 2010; Mwangi, 2014).

Key studies explore how Kenya's internal political landscape and external factors have affected its position on Israel. For instance, research has analyzed the significance of Kenya's diplomatic ties with fellow African countries and its position within the Non-Aligned Movement, helping to understand Kenya's evolving recognition of Israel (Mutua, 2012; Kamau, 2018).

Additionally, scholars have studied the impact of global events, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Cold War on Kenya's diplomatic strategies with Israel. These studies highlight the challenges Kenya faced in balancing its sovereignty and non-alignment principles while responding to pressures from the international community (Wanyama & Otieno, 2016).

Economic and security factors also played a key role in shaping Kenya's relations with Israel. Research emphasizes the importance of cooperation in areas like agriculture and technology, which strengthened diplomatic ties. Moreover, mutual security concerns—such as

terrorism and regional instability—led to increased collaboration in intelligence sharing and counterterrorism efforts. The collective body of work on Kenya's perception of Israel offers a deeper understanding of the political dynamics that have shaped their relationship (Githuku, 2017; Njeru, 2019).

Context within History During the Cold War Era

President Jomo Kenyatta (1963–1978)

Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first President shaped his foreign policies during the Cold War with a vision that balanced domestic priorities with international relations including Israel. The establishment of the National Youth Service (NYS) was inspired by Israel's Gadna model, which emphasized youth engagement in nation-building, particularly in agriculture (Naim, 2005).

In 1964, Israel assisted in the creation of Kenya's General Service Unit (GSU), an elite security force tasked with protecting the President, senior government officials, and foreign entities, including Israel's embassy and El Al airline in Nairobi (Otenyo, 2004, p. 80). This collaboration highlighted Israel's influence on Kenya's security strategies during Kenyatta's administration.

President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi (1978–1990)

Daniel arap Moi assumed the presidency after Kenyatta's death on August 22, 1978. While Moi adopted the "Nyayo doctrine" to continue Kenyatta's legacy, he adjusted Kenya's policies in response to changing global and regional dynamics. In the 1980s, Kenya maintained strong ties with socialist Ethiopia, largely due to the threat posed by Somalia. Despite these shifts, Kenya preserved its alliances with both Ethiopia and Israel maintaining regional stability.

Under Moi, the policymaking process became more centralized. Unlike Kenyatta who delegated much decision-making to State House, Moi often bypassed institutional players, relying on personal diplomacy. This approach sometimes excluded key stakeholders limiting the inclusiveness of Kenya's policies.

Regional instability, particularly ethnic conflicts in Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Burundi also influenced Kenya's foreign policy. Kenya's policies were aimed at resolving conflicts and stabilizing the region (Mwuara, 1997).

Moi's Foreign Policy Development (1978–1990)

During Moi's presidency, Kenya's decisions on recognition and diplomacy were influenced by global geopolitical competition. While Europe was divided into military alliances, Africa adopted the Estrada Doctrine, which advocated recognizing new governments regardless of their ideological orientation (Jessup, 1931). For Kenya, this meant balancing relations with Western allies, the Soviet bloc, and non-aligned nations.

Moi's diplomacy helped secure financial aid, especially during the downturn in Kenya's coffee industry. His visits to Israel and West Germany strengthened Kenya's strategic ties, particularly in the Indian Ocean region as part of efforts to counter Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf (Weekly Review, January 11, 1980, p. 6).

Moi as Architect of Kenya's Foreign Policy

Musambayi (1995) notes that Moi placed greater emphasis on direct engagement and summits in foreign policy compared to Kenyatta, who relied more on his foreign affairs team. Moi centralized foreign policy operations at Harambee House, which allowed him to shape

Kenya's international strategy but also led to criticisms of excessive centralization. In this manner, institutional input was often neglected.

Dr. Robert Ouko recognized this shift in Kenya's approach, acknowledging Moi's direct involvement in shaping the country's foreign policy (Chelagat, 1991). However, the centralization of decision-making often overshadowed broader policy discussions as diverse perspectives were excluded. Kenya's policies under Moi often prioritized principles over rigid commitments, maintaining neutrality in conflicts while navigating complex relations with Israel and Arab nations. During this time, Kenya expressed solidarity with Arab nations, which created tension with Israel. Similarly, Kenya's foreign policy towards the Democratic Republic of Congo evolved following a change in government there (Musambayi, 1995; Chelagat, 1991).

Kenya-Israel Relations: Moi's Diplomatic Achievements

Kenya's relationship with Israel evolved during Moi's presidency, reflecting shifts in regional and global politics. In 1964 for instance, Israel helped establish Kenya's GSU, strengthening security cooperation (Otenyo, 2004, p. 80). However, relations cooled in 1977 when Kenya, following a visit by Foreign Minister Munyu Waiyaki to Arab nations, issued a statement supporting the Palestinian cause. This led to the opening of a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Nairobi and the establishment of diplomatic ties with the PLO in 1980 (The Washington Post, June 7, 1977).

Kenya further solidified its relationship with the PLO by establishing ambassadorial-level ties in 1980. In 1988, Kenya supported the inclusion of the PLO as an observer at the UN General Assembly, even as it restored diplomatic relations with Israel that same year.

Despite its support for the Palestinian cause, Kenya maintained an official position of neutrality, as articulated by Foreign Minister Robert Ouko. In response to a request for formal recognition of the "State of Palestine" from PLO ambassador Yousef Awed, Ouko reaffirmed Kenya's commitment to supporting the PLO without making declarations recognizing Palestine as a state (Kenya Times, June 8, 1989). Since then, Kenya has not made any official acknowledgment of the Palestinian state.

In December 1982, Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir met with President Moi during a brief stop in Nairobi. Moi used the opportunity to request Israel's assistance in enhancing his security, demonstrating the continued importance of Israel-Kenya relations amid diplomatic challenges (Afrique Report, 1982).

In 1983, during the UN anniversary speech in Nairobi, Kenya's Foreign Minister Elijah Mwangale emphasized the need for peace in the Middle East, stressing that it hinged on the settlement of Palestinian refugees (Daily Nation, October 25, 1993). In 1988, President Moi expressed Kenya's position on resolving conflicts in the Arabian Peninsula, emphasizing shared views with Egypt on the importance of granting self-determination to the Palestinian people (Weekly Review, April 8, 1988, p. 29).

Despite initial tensions with the Arab League, Kenya ultimately reestablished diplomatic ties with Israel after a fifteen-year hiatus. This decision proved pivotal for Israel, which sought support from African nations, although it was met with disapproval from Arab countries. Kenya defended its move citing the PLO's acknowledgment of Israel's statehood and its agreement to abide by UN resolutions on the Middle East. Dr. Robert Ouko, Kenya's Foreign Minister, expressed hope that Israel would engage in negotiations with the PLO under UN supervision (Weekly Review, January 6, 1989, p. 5).

While the Arab League expressed dissatisfaction, Kenya continued to support the PLO's diplomatic privileges in Nairobi and advocated for Palestinian concerns at UN meetings. President Moi emphasized that Kenya's actions were a response to the PLO's endorsement of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which recognized both Israel's statehood and Palestine's right to self-determination. Kenya's foreign policy during this time often employed strategic ambiguity, maintaining neutrality while promoting peace by avoiding confrontations with neighboring countries (Weekly Review report on January 6th, 1989, page 5).

Kenya's Relationship with Israel during the Presidencies after the Cold War Era

The Kibaki Administration (2002–2013): Strengthening Relations with Israel

During President Kibaki's tenure (2002–2013), Kenya's relationship with Israel experienced significant growth. A pivotal moment was the signing of a bilateral agreement on September 4, 2009, focusing on water resource management, irrigation, and capacity-building initiatives. This agreement underscored President Kibaki's commitment to fostering closer ties with Israel. Collaboration was further solidified through interactions between President Kibaki and Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman (ReliefWeb, September 4, 2009).

Military Cooperation and Support

In 2010, Kenya initiated discussions to acquire military equipment from Israel, including counter-insurgency tools and drones for border surveillance (Ahmadinejad, April 30, 2010). These discussions marked the beginning of intensified military collaboration, which was formalized in 2011 through a treaty aimed at combating terrorism, fraud, and criminal activities (Estrin, September 25, 2013).

A defining moment in this partnership came in 2013 when Israeli forces assisted Kenyan troops in responding to the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi. This tragic event, which claimed at least 72 lives, underscored the depth of military cooperation between the two nations. Israeli agencies also supported Kenya's investigative efforts demonstrating solidarity during security crises (Reuters, September 26, 2013).

The Uhuru Kenyatta Administration (2013–2022): A Balanced Approach

President Uhuru Kenyatta continued to strengthen Kenya's relations with Israel while maintaining a balanced approach to foreign policy. In 2016, he supported Israel's bid for observer status at the African Union (AU) and hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This visit was a pivotal moment with Kenyatta emphasizing collaboration for mutual security and economic benefits (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 23, 2016).

Kenyatta also advocated for revisiting Africa's relationship with Israel. In 2016, he stated: "We believe that working together can contribute to making the world a safer place" (Ahrens, July 5, 2016). Netanyahu's attendance at Kenyatta's 2017 inauguration further cemented this partnership with both leaders reiterating their commitment to combating terrorism (Elliott, November 30, 2017).

The William Ruto Administration (2022–Present): Navigating Shifts in Foreign Policy

President William Ruto's administration has introduced notable shifts in Kenya's foreign policy. Shortly after his disputed election victory in August 2022, Ruto announced that Kenya would no longer recognize the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). However, this

stance was reversed two days later to align with AU and UN positions supporting SADR's self-determination rights (The East African, September 16, 2022).

In 2023, Kenya abstained from a World Health Assembly vote on Palestinian health rights, signaling a refined shift toward a more favorable stance on Israel while publicly maintaining support for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders (Kenyan Foreign Policy Report, June 5, 2023).

In October 2023, Ruto expressed support for Israel's right to self-defense but also endorsed the creation of a Palestinian state, rejecting terrorism and occupation as solutions to conflict. In November, he reaffirmed Kenya's commitment to a two-state solution (Moturi, 2024). However, by January 2024, Kenya criticized Israel's handling of the Gaza conflict with Ruto emphasizing humanitarian concerns while reiterating Kenya's support for Israel's right to self-defense (Moturi, 2024).

Israel's Observer Status at the African Union

Historically, Kenya supported Palestinian causes under President Kenyatta's leadership at UN meetings. However, recent actions such as Kenya's vote against a Palestinian plea at the UN General Assembly indicate a potential policy shift. At the AU summit in February 2023, Kenya did not oppose Israel's request for observer status despite AU criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians (Kenyan Foreign Policy Report, June 5, 2023).

In 2024, opposition to Israel's observer status intensified with 150 African and diaspora groups urging the AU to deny the request due to reported human rights abuses in Gaza. Algeria and South Africa strongly opposed Israel's application. By late 2024, diplomatic tensions

escalated with several African nations recalling ambassadors and freezing relations with Israel over the Gaza conflict (Nation, February 17, 2024).

Economic and Labor Relations

Amid a labor shortage in Israel caused by the Hamas conflict, Kenya sent 1,500 workers to Israeli farms, joining Malawi's efforts to mitigate the workforce gap left by departing Thai migrant workers (Aradi & Priya, December 7, 2023). This collaboration reflects Kenya's willingness to deepen economic ties with Israel.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study outlines the core ideas and theories that inform the analysis of Kenya's foreign policy and its relationship with Israel during President Moi's leadership. The framework draws on key concepts from international relations, geopolitics, and foreign policy analysis.

Recognition Theory

Recognition is central to international law determining the rights and responsibilities of emerging states on the global stage. It signifies the formal acceptance of a state's existence and grants it autonomy along with the legal duties and privileges that come with it. The recognition process is complex, often influenced by other states and international institutions such as the United Nations. Recognition of a state's identity is critical for its navigation within the international system and for establishing its place in the global community (Taylor, 1994; Satvyrata, 1964).

In instances where a state undergoes a change in leadership due to events such as revolutions or uprisings while maintaining its structural integrity, obtaining international recognition becomes a crucial step. If the new government is not recognized, it may face significant legal and political challenges. Recognition in international law is formalized through actions or declarations by other states ensuring that the new government adheres to established international norms (Malcolm, 1997; Satvyrata, 1964).

Once a state achieves recognition, it becomes difficult to reverse that acknowledgment even with changes in leadership or governmental structure. Recognition provides a state with legal standing allowing it to engage in international agreements, treaties, and esteemed organizations such as the United Nations. Recognition also enables states and governments to exercise privileges like voting rights. However, recognizing new regimes can be particularly complicated in regions where governance is disputed, highlighting the pivotal role of international acknowledgment in shaping diplomatic relations (Talmon, 1988; Dixon & McCorquodale, 1991).

Guiding Principles of Kenya's Diplomatic Policy

Kenya's foreign policy is rooted in principles set forth in foundational documents such as the Kenya African National Union (KANU) manifestos of 1961 and 1963 and Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965. These documents have had a lasting impact on Kenya's diplomatic approach. Throughout its history, Kenya has placed a strong emphasis on securing its borders and safeguarding national interests. The country's foreign policy continues to prioritize security and economic development as central tenets (Ochola, 2016).

In a seminar paper dated 1997, Makumi Mwagiru conducted a survey of Kenya's recognition policy during and after the Cold War era, with the intention of elucidating the rationale behind it. Mwagiru observed a shift in recognition policy, transitioning from recognizing entire states to recognizing specific regimes. He endeavored to trace the diplomatic endeavors that instigated this abrupt policy transformation. Consequently, the seminar paper leaves us with a lingering inquiry: Does Kenya's recognition policy exhibit consistent trends regarding the legitimacy of governments? (Mwagiru, 1997).

Kenya's Diplomatic Approach In 1971 as minister for foreign affairs, Dr. Njoroge Mungai's diplomatic strategy focused on recognizing administrations rather than regimes. This approach was evident in Kenya's acknowledgment of General Idi Amin's leadership in Uganda amidst unrest, in contrast to its treatment of Milton Obote's regime (Munene, 1997).

During the Cold War, Kenya adopted the Estrada Doctrine, which called for recognizing governments regardless of their political orientation. This doctrine aimed to establish a consistent standard for diplomatic recognition (Jessup, 1931). However, critics argued that it blurred the distinction between recognition and the maintenance of diplomatic ties.

The Tobar Doctrine or the Legitimacy Doctrine, proposed that governments arising from unconstitutional means should only be recognized if they enjoyed the support of their citizens. However, this principle often conflicted with political realities (Stansifer, 1967, p. 251-272). Kenya's recognition of authoritarian regimes underscores the complexity of diplomatic acknowledgment especially during periods of political turmoil. In contrast, Mexico formulated the Estrada Doctrine in 1930, named after Foreign Minister Genaro Estrada. The Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary highlighted the challenge of reconciling theoretical principles with the demands of real-world politics (author citation).

Under President Moi, Kenya pursued a pragmatic foreign policy recognizing governments where necessary to prevent conflict. This strategy balanced practicality with strategic foresight (Galloway, 1993, p. 142). Although Kenya initially struggled to establish a consistent foreign policy, John Howell (1968) identified two dominant directions: conservatism and radicalism. Conservatism was reflected in Kenya's cautious stance on issues like Israel designed to preserve regional stability. Meanwhile, Kenya's emphasis on neutrality signaled its commitment to autonomy and self-governance in international affairs.

While neutrality was a guiding principle, Kenya also engaged with South Africa signaling a pragmatic approach to foreign relations (author citation). The principle of non-alignment reinforced Kenya's commitment to self-determination and respect for the sovereignty of other nations. This perspective aligned with the core values of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations Charter+ and U.S. principles of territorial integrity (Olatunda, 1985).

Theoretical Perspectives

This study utilizes various theoretical frameworks to analyze Kenya's foreign policy:

Realism Perspective

Realism suggests that states prioritize their self-interest, emphasizing power and security in a competitive international environment. In the context of Kenya's foreign policy particularly regarding its relationship with Israel, the theory helps explain how Kenya navigated global politics during the Cold War, balancing both local stability and international considerations (Morgenthau, 1948).

Constructivist Approach

Constructivism focuses on the role of ideas, identities, policy, and social norms in shaping a nation's policy. Kenya's interactions with Israel during the Cold War were influenced not only by geopolitical concerns but also by ideological beliefs, identity politics, and the broader context of African decolonization approach (Wendt, 1999). This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how Kenya's political leaders shaped their foreign policy with their position on Israel reflecting broader political narratives.

Dependency Theory

Dependency Theory analyzes the social factors that shape foreign policy decisions in developing countries. Originating in the Global South, this theory examines how nations like Kenya are integrated into a global system that often perpetuates dependence on more powerful countries. The theory sheds light on how external influences such as aid and regional partnerships shaped Kenya's foreign policy, including its diplomatic relationship with Israel (Dos Santos, 1970).

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

The Foreign Policy Analysis model examines the role of individual leaders and decision-making processes in shaping a country's foreign policy. This approach is valuable for understanding President Moi's involvement in shaping Kenya's relations with Israel as well as how internal political dynamics influenced his government's decisions (Hudson, 2014).

Geopolitical Considerations

Geopolitical Theory examines the significance of Kenya's geographical position in East Africa and how this impacted its foreign policy. Kenya's proximity to the Middle East, its strategic role as a gateway to East Africa and its contribution to regional stability all shaped its

diplomatic interactions with Israel. These factors help explain why Kenya maintained active involvement in global politics during the Cold War despite pressures from neighboring Arab nations and regional groups (Cohen, 2003).

Integrating the Theoretical Perspectives

By synthesizing these theoretical approaches, this study provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing Kenya's foreign policy. It explores the intersections of global power dynamics, economic interrelations and domestic politics. Offering insight into the factors that shaped Kenya's diplomatic relationship with Israel. This integrated framework helps explain the principles guiding Kenya's foreign policy decisions and reveals the broader influences on its stance toward Israel between 1978 and 1990.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative approach to analyze Kenya's foreign policy and its evolving relationship with Israel. Both primary and secondary data were examined to ensure a comprehensive analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018). Key sources included:

- Official Documents: Speeches and statements from government archives.
- Academic Literature: Peer-reviewed studies on Kenya's diplomatic policies.
- Media Outlets: Articles providing updated information on the geopolitical landscape.
- Historical Documents: Contextual analysis of Kenya-Israel relations during the Cold War era.

Analytical Approach

The study employed several analytical methods:

1. **Source Triangulation:** Cross-checking data from diverse sources to confirm accuracy (Yin, 2017).
2. **Thematic Coding:** Categorizing themes related to foreign policy strategies, influences, and diplomatic ties (Patton, 2015).
3. **Comparative Analysis:** Examining Kenya's foreign policy shifts over time, particularly under different administrations.

Challenges

The study encountered challenges in accessing dispersed literature across various publications. Synthesizing these sources into a cohesive narrative was time-intensive. Additionally, some officials and stakeholders were reluctant to discuss sensitive topics related to government policies, particularly those involving former President Moi (Author's Citation).

Despite these limitations, the study provides a refined understanding of Kenya's evolving relationship with Israel highlighting key developments across successive administrations.

Findings

Kenya's foreign policy over the decades has been shaped by dynamic geopolitical realities and its evolving priorities in the international system. The findings highlight key developments and themes that have characterized Kenya's relationship with Israel and its navigation of the broader Israel-Palestine conflict. Each administration brought unique

approaches to the table, informed by domestic and regional imperatives as well as global pressures.

Cold War Influence and Kenya's Strategic Position

The Cold War era (1947–1991) was pivotal in shaping Kenya's early foreign policy under President Moi (1978–1990). Positioned strategically in East Africa, Kenya became an essential ally for Western powers, particularly the United States and Britain, in countering Soviet influence in the region. This alignment naturally extended to relations with Israel, which was seen as a critical partner by Western allies.

While Kenya leaned towards Western powers that strongly supported Israel, it also aligned itself with the broader African and non-aligned movements advocating for decolonization, sovereignty, and self-determination. These dual pressures led to a pragmatic and balanced foreign policy during Moi's administration, where Kenya cultivated relationships with Israel without alienating Arab nations advocating for Palestinian rights (Akinyi, 2020; Kiruga, 2023).

This duality highlights Kenya's early ability to navigate the complexities of Cold War geopolitics, prioritizing national interests while demonstrating solidarity with broader African causes.

Pragmatic Relations with Israel

Across all administrations, Kenya has maintained pragmatic ties with Israel. Kenya realized the mutual benefits of collaboration in critical areas such as technology, agriculture, security, and intelligence.

1. **Technology and Agriculture:** Israel's advancements in water management, irrigation, and agricultural technology have been invaluable to Kenya, a country frequently grappling with drought and food insecurity. Agreements during the Kibaki and Uhuru administrations, including the 2009 bilateral pact on water resource management, demonstrate this enduring partnership.

2. **Security and Counterterrorism:** Israel's expertise in counterterrorism and intelligence has been particularly beneficial to Kenya, given its vulnerability to terrorism, especially from groups like Al-Shabaab. The Westgate Mall attack in 2013 underscored the importance of this collaboration, with Israel forces for decades playing a key role in Kenya's response and subsequent investigations (Muzaffar, 2023).

While these collaborations have been mutually beneficial, they have also drawn criticism domestically and regionally, particularly from constituencies sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, Kenya's focus on leveraging Israeli expertise for internal stability and development has remained steadfast across administrations.

Diplomatic Flexibility

Kenya's foreign policy reflects a consistent emphasis on diplomatic flexibility. Allowing it to maintain ties with Israel, while simultaneously engaging with Arab and African nations advocating for Palestinian rights.

1. **Balancing Acts:** Under President Moi, Kenya carefully balanced its relationships with Israel and Arab nations, adopting a neutral stance that prioritized Kenya's national interests. This approach continued under President Kibaki who focused on pragmatic partnerships while avoiding polarizing positions on the Israel-Palestine conflict (The Guardian. 30 December 2002).

2. **Regional and Global Engagement:** Kenya's diplomatic strategy has often involved in aligning with African Union (AU) positions while pursuing independent bilateral relationships. For instance, President Uhuru Kenyatta supported Israel's bid for observer status at the AU. He recognized Israel's potential to contribute to regional security and development, even as other AU members criticized Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

3. **Evolving Perspectives:** Under President William Ruto, Kenya's stance has become increasingly subtle. While expressing support for Israel's right to self-defense, the administration has also emphasized humanitarian concerns in Gaza and endorsed a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders. Kenya's abstention from a World Health Assembly vote on Palestinian health rights in 2023 further illustrates its delicate balancing act (Kenyan Foreign Policy Report, 2023).

Challenges in Navigating the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Kenya's policy towards the Israel-Palestine conflict has been shaped by a combination of domestic, regional, and international pressures.

1. **Domestic Pressures:** Public opinion in Kenya has often leaned toward supporting Palestinian rights, influenced by Kenya's historical solidarity with liberation movements and its own anti-colonial legacy. This sentiment has occasionally clashed with Kenya's practical engagements with Israel requiring administrations to adopt cautious and nuanced approaches.

2. **Regional Dynamics:** Kenya's position within the African Union has further complicated its standing. While some AU members such as South Africa and Algeria have vocally opposed Israel's observer status and taken steps to isolate Israel diplomatically, Kenya

has adopted a more moderate approach focusing on mutual benefits while avoiding outright opposition.

3. Global Implications: Kenya's foreign policy has also been influenced by its relationships with major global powers. For example, its support for a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, despite the eventual U.S. veto reflects Kenya's attempt to balance its commitments to international law and human rights with its strategic alliances.

Key Insights for Future Policy

The findings reveal several key insights that are likely to shape Kenya's foreign policy going forward:

- **Adapting to Changing Realities:** Kenya's ability to adapt to shifting geopolitical realities while prioritizing its national interests has been a consistent theme. Whether navigating Cold War dynamics or addressing contemporary challenges such as terrorism and climate change, Kenya's pragmatic approach has ensured its relevance on the global stage.
- **Leveraging Strategic Partnerships:** Kenya's partnerships with Israel in areas such as technology, security, and agriculture underscore the importance of leveraging international collaborations to address domestic challenges.
- **Promoting Regional Peace:** Kenya's emphasis on regional stability and its cautious diplomacy in the Israel-Palestine conflict highlight its role as a mediator and advocate for peaceful solutions.

- **Balancing Principles and Practicality:** Kenya's foreign policy demonstrates the challenge of balancing principled stances on issues such as Palestinian self-determination with practical considerations of national and regional interests.

Kenya's foreign policy can be summed up as evidenced by its engagement with Israel and the broader Israel-Palestine conflict, reflects a careful balance of pragmatism, adaptability, and principled diplomacy. These characteristics will likely continue to define Kenya's reflecting to global relations in the years ahead.

Analysis

During Moi's tenure, Kenya's foreign policy reflected a strategic approach to managing international relations in a period of intense global divisions. Kenya maintained strong ties with the West due to historical and economic connections while upholding African solidarity and advocating for the recognition of Palestinian statehood. This balancing act highlighted the complexities within Kenya's foreign policy as noted by Kiruga (2023).

The Moi administration demonstrated skillful diplomacy in navigating foreign affairs. Israel was strategically important to Kenya, contributing significantly through collaboration in agriculture and military partnerships. Kenya benefited from advancements in irrigation technology and agricultural expertise provided by Israel (Kiruga, 2023). Furthermore, Israel's intelligence assistance was pivotal in addressing security challenges in a region frequently threatened by terrorism (Muzaffar, 2023).

Moi's leadership, spanning 1978–1990, exemplified Kenya's deliberate navigation of the international recognition of Israel and Palestine. The administration's decisions emphasized a balance between historical alliances, regional unity, and global dynamics. These efforts sought to

protect Kenya's national interests while supporting peace and stability in the Middle East. The Cold War further complicated these dynamics, but Kenya's diplomacy underscored its commitment to sovereignty and regional harmony.

This analysis explores how Kenya addressed the recognition of Israel and Palestine during Moi's era, examining the interplay of national concerns, Cold War influences, and international law. It highlights the necessity for Kenya to remain adaptable to shifting global landscapes to safeguard its diplomatic relevance. Under Moi's leadership, the nation balanced its relationship with Israel while advocating for Palestinian rights, reflecting its role as a regional mediator and proponent of peace.

Moi's diplomatic successes demonstrate the importance of employing strategic approaches to global challenges. Kenya's recognition of Israel, alongside acknowledgment of Palestinian statehood exemplified an evolving foreign policy that balanced national interests with broader ethical considerations. This duality reinforced Kenya's image as a credible mediator on the international stage.

The analysis also emphasizes the role of public participation and institutional collaboration—particularly involving parliament and the foreign ministry - in shaping foreign policy. These elements ensured that Kenya's diplomatic efforts were reflective of its regional leadership ambitions and global laying a strong foundation for future policy development.

To sum up, Kenya's pragmatic approach toward Israel extended beyond Cold War ideologies focusing instead on national development and technological progress. Its delicate position on the Israel-Palestine conflict reflected a dedication to ethical diplomacy and regional stability. The experiences and lessons from the Cold War era influenced Kenya's foreign policy

trajectory. Moi's administration can be remembered for its adaptability, practicality, and commitment to fostering global stability.

Post-Moi Foreign Policy Evolution

The foreign policy strategies of successive administrations - those of Kibaki, Uhuru, and Ruto—reflect a continuation of Moi's legacy while adapting to contemporary global conditions. Each administration has built upon those foundations established during the Cold War era incorporating new priorities and responding to emerging challenges.

Kibaki and Uhuru Administrations

Under Kibaki's leadership (2002–2013), Kenya's foreign policy emphasized economic progress and global partnerships. Practical collaboration with Israel, particularly in technology and economic development, marked a shift from Cold War ideologies, focusing instead on national advancement and modernization (Chege, 2008).

The Uhuru administration (2013–2022) continued this trajectory, maintaining diplomatic engagement with both Israel and Palestine. By advocating for Palestinian rights while strengthening ties with Israel, Kenya reinforced its commitment to balanced foreign policy. This approach highlighted Kenya's role as a significant regional player, integrating peacebuilding efforts with developmental (William, 2016).

The Kibaki and Uhuru administrations underscore Kenya's capacity to adapt its foreign policy to changing circumstances while maintaining core principles. Their strategies reflect the enduring influence of lessons learned during Moi's era, showcasing Kenya's diplomatic skill and flexibility.

Ruto Administration

The Ruto administration (2022–present) builds upon the legacy of its predecessors by prioritizing flexibility and regional stability. While the Cold War’s influence has diminished, Kenya’s interactions with Israel and Palestine remain informed by historical choices. Ruto’s government emphasizes economic collaboration and technological partnerships as part of its broader development agenda.

In navigating the Israel-Palestine conflict, Kenya adopts a balanced stance, fostering partnerships with Israel while demonstrating empathy for Palestinian aspirations. This approach underscores Kenya’s commitment to ethical foreign policy and recognition of the complexities of Middle Eastern politics.

The Ruto administration’s foreign policy draws insights from historical experiences, adapting them to address contemporary challenges. By aligning national interests with regional and global stability, Kenya continues to demonstrate thoughtful and pragmatic diplomacy (The Standard, October 17, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper delved into the sinuous realm of recognition and non-recognition policies under Moi's presidency, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics that defined Israel's diplomatic efforts during this transformative era. Through an analysis, I revealed the delicate interplay of economic interests, political allegiances, and global power dynamics in shaping Kenya's recognition decisions.

Moi's leadership from 1978 to 1990 highlights the challenges of managing foreign relations during the Cold War era. Under his administration, Kenya carefully balanced strategic partnerships with Israel while supporting the Palestinian cause. This pragmatic approach enabled Kenya to benefit from Israel's technological and security expertise while positioning itself as a credible mediator in Middle Eastern affairs, as noted by Akinyi (2020) and Kiruga (2023).

Kenya's foreign policy during this period demonstrated adaptability to changing political dynamics. This flexibility promoted national progress while fostering stability in relations with both Israel and Palestine (Muzaffar, 2023). The foreign policy decisions made during Moi's era continue to influence Kenya's modern approach, particularly in maintaining neutrality and addressing complex global issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict (Kiruga, 2023).

Suggested Recommendations

Kenya's foreign relations strategy has evolved steadily since independence, shaped by global trends and challenges. To craft a robust foreign policy in today's context, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Foreign policy development should involve a wide range of participants, including members of the public, government representatives, and experts across different sectors. Educational institutions can provide platforms for informed discussions on foreign policy, allowing comparisons with other nations' strategies. This inclusive approach could address perceptions of inactivity within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ensure policies align with Kenya's goals and aspirations.

2. Diplomatic Training and Capacity Building

Kenya's foreign service should emphasize continuous training for diplomats, focusing on handling complex international relationships with flexibility. Such efforts will help Kenya maintain its neutrality while effectively engaging with major global players, including Israel (Akinyi, 2020).

3. Strengthening Multilateral Engagement

Kenya should deepen its participation in bodies such as the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN). These platforms provide critical opportunities to mediate and support solutions to conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine issue (Muzaffar, 2023).

4. Enhancing Economic Diplomacy

Strengthening ties with Israel can advance growth in vital sectors, including agriculture, technology, and defense, as highlighted by Kiruga (2020).

5. Public Diplomacy and Parliamentary Oversight

Foreign policy decisions should be transparent and representative of public interests. Enhanced parliamentary oversight and public discourse will ensure alignment between national priorities and ethical global standards (Akinyi, 2020).

6. Learning from Historical Diplomacy

Kenya should draw lessons from its Cold War-era diplomacy to inform future foreign policy strategies. Managing international dynamics while safeguarding national interests has been a cornerstone of Kenya's diplomatic success (Muzaffar, 2023). These historical insights can guide future administrations in sustaining Kenya's leadership in African diplomacy.

Actions

The recommendations aim to strengthen Kenya's foreign policy framework to remain flexible and responsive to evolving global conditions. Building on past experiences and addressing current challenges will ensure Kenya continues to play a significant role in regional and international diplomacy.

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